

VZCZCXRO2407
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #2628/01 3651446
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311446Z DEC 07
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0115
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002628

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2017

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PINS](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: PA ARRESTS SUSPECTS IN KILLING OF OFF-DUTY IDF
SOLDIERS; MILITANTS THREATEN TO ASSASSINATE FAYYAD

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. PM Salam Fayyad and PA General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) have confirmed that PA security officers arrested two suspects in the killing of two off-duty IDF soldiers outside Hebron on December 28 and will prosecute them. PA security officials say the suspects will be moved to Jericho and immediately put on trial. Fayyad expressed public condolences to the victims' families and pledged to press the PA's security campaign. In response, Hamas websites/outlets carried threats calling for PM Fayyad's assassination that labeled Fayyad and Interior Minister (MoI) Abd al-Razaq al-Yahya as collaborators who serve their "American and Zionist masters." PLO Negotiations Affairs chief Sa'eb Erekat told the Consul General on December 29 that the PA is annoyed that the GOI sent the UN SYG a letter accusing the PA of failing to fight terror. Erekat noted that the PA has fully cooperated with Israeli authorities in this case. End summary.

Two Off-Duty IDF Soldiers Killed Near Hebron;
PA Arrests, Will Prosecute Suspects

¶2. (C) Mukhabarat contacts report that Ali Abd al-Hamid Dandis, Amar Badr Halim Taha (aka "Abu Snaynah") and Nabil Basil Natshah (a money-changer involved in arms/contraband smuggling) shot and killed two off-duty IDF soldiers from Kiryat Arba on December 28 to steal and sell their M16 rifles. According to the Mukhabarat, Taha said he saw the Israelis (the two soldiers and a female who escaped) hiking in a valley below his home near Telem settlement (about 12 km west of Hebron) and telephoned Dandis and Natshah. The three drove a Toyota Landcruiser toward the Israelis and immediately opened fire with handguns. The Mukhabarat report the suspects said one of the wounded Israelis was able to return fire with his rifle, killing Natshah. The two suspects took the soldiers' rifles and drove to another vehicle (a Subaru), leaving Natshah's body in the Landcruiser and fleeing. The two reportedly returned to Hebron, passing through an IDF checkpoint, before they were arrested by PA security forces. The Mukhabarat say the suspects report no terror group affiliation, had no other accomplices and had not planned to attack any Israelis until Taha saw the three hiking in the valley.

¶3. (C) PM Fayyad told the Consul General on December 28 that PA security forces arrested the two principal suspects (Dandis and Taha) in the shooting deaths and will prosecute them. Fayyad said the suspects confessed to shooting the Israelis. While Hamas and PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack, neither of the two suspects is a known militant, Fayyad said, while Natshah was a moneychanger with ties to many factions, including but not limited to Hamas.

Mukhabarat: NSF "Wrong, Speculative" in
Claims Attack Was Smuggling Deal "Went Wrong"

14. (C) Mukhabarat officials say Dandis and Taha remain in their custody in Hebron, and will be transferred to Jericho soon to face trial as soon as the ISA and PA complete their investigations. He said PA security officials are fully cooperating with the Israeli ISA and returned the weapons to the ISA. While Hebron National Security Forces (NSF) commander BG Samih al-Sayfi told local press on December 29 that the shooting could have been a criminal, rather than terrorist, attack, related to a weapons smuggling deal "went wrong," Mukhabarat contacts say al-Sayfi's claims are speculative and not credible. However, Mukhabarat contacts say al-Sayfi was correct in his public assertions that various factional claims of responsibility "have no basis and are attempts to obstruct the ongoing investigation."

Hamas Outlets Carry Fayyad Death Threats

15. (U) Hamas websites and media outlets carried death threats, attributed to Gaza-based al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades cells, calling on all al-Aqsa militants to assassinate PM Fayyad. The same outlets demanded that MoI Abd al-Razaq al-Yahya immediately resign, or also face "being targeted by al-Aqsa Brigades in the West Bank." The postings called Fayyad and al-Yahya collaborators who serve their "American and Zionist masters." The postings also said the PA Cabinet has "crossed all lines" and called for its dissolution.

JERUSALEM 00002628 002 OF 002

Fayyad, al-Yahya Vow to Continue
Strong Security Efforts, Fight Terror

16. (U) Local press report that on December 30 PM Fayyad told a public gathering in Hertzliya hosted by Israeli President Shimon Peres that "we mourn the deaths of the two soldiers; every death is a senseless one," and extended condolences to the victims' families. During December 29 visits to Nablus and Tulkarm, Fayyad told Palestinian press that the PA will continue to press its security campaign to eliminate armed chaos, and will fulfill its Roadmap obligations. MoI al-Yahya said the PA is dismantling terror groups, commenting that "there is no al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades any more" and pledging to establish law and order using force where needed.

Palestinians Annoyed by Israeli
Complaints Against PA to UN SYG

17. (C) Sa'eb Erekat told the Consul General on December 29 that President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) confirmed that the suspects remain in PA custody and will be prosecuted. However, he said the PA is annoyed that Israeli UN Ambassador Dan Gillerman sent UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon a letter accusing the PA of failing to fight terror or meet its security obligations. Erekat said Abbas is unhappy about this letter, as the PA has closely cooperated with Israeli security authorities and arrested the suspects, and said the Palestinian side has been careful recently not to "run to the UN every time a Palestinian is killed by the IDF."

WALLES